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Task Specialization and Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Examination Among Blue-Collar Workers Spécialisation dans l'emploi et appartenance à l'organisation

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Résumé de l'article

Depuis le commencement de l'ère industrielle, la spécialisation des tâches a été à la base de la création des postes de travail. Ce principe a été vulgarisé d'abord par le taylorisme au tournant du siècle et, un peu plus tard, par l'introduction des chaînes de montage ou d'assemblage dans les usines. Même s'il ne fait pas de doute que la spécialisation des postes de travail a augmenté l'efficacité et la productivité des sociétés industrielles, elle a en même temps soulevé beaucoup de problèmes humains et techniques. Associés à la spécialisation des emplois se posent des problèmes sérieux relativement aux comportements négatifs des travailleurs à l'égard des postes qu'ils occupent et des entreprises qui les emploient de même que, au plan technique, la difficulté d'établir une bonne coordination de postes de travail trop spécialisés.

L'article ci-dessus étudie le rapport entre la spécialisation des emplois et le degré d'engagement des travailleurs manuels dans les entreprises. Qui dit spécialisation des emplois dit subdivision des différents éléments d'un travail à exécuter en plusieurs tâches parcellaires de telle sorte que l'emploi ne contient qu'un nombre limité de tâches. D'une façon générale, on reconnaît que cette façon de procéder comporte trois conséquences typiques : le travail à exécuter est fragmentaire ; il se répète ; il est simple. Porter et Smith ont défini l'engagement comme une sorte de rapport particulier entre le travailleur et l'entreprise qui l'emploie dans lequel le travailleur endosse et appuie les objectifs et la politique de l'entreprise, démontre la volonté d'en assurer le succès par ses propres efforts et désire rester à son service pendant un temps indéfini. L'auteur soutient que les trois conséquences fondamentales de la spécialisation des postes de travail affectent le degré d'engagement du salarié dans l'entreprise dans ses trois dimensions : la fragmentation du travail exerce une influence sur les travailleurs dans leur adhésion et leur appui aux objectifs de l'entreprise ; le caractère répétitif du travail, leur volonté de faire des efforts nécessaires pour en assurer la réussite et la simplification du travail, leur désir de continuer à y demeurer.

Dans cette étude, la spécialisation des postes de travail a été considérée sous deux aspects distincts, d'abord en observant sur place le processus de travail et ensuite en interrogeant les travailleurs sur l'ampleur de la répétition et de la simplification de la tâche. Quant au degré d'engagement dans l'entreprise, il a été mesuré à partir des réponses à douze questions sur une échelle de type Likert à trois barreaux : oui, indécis, non. Le questionnaire fut conçu de telle sorte que chaque tiers des douze rubriques relatives au degré d'engagement soit orienté vers une des trois dimensions de l'engagement. La crédibilité interne logique de l'échelle d'engagement dans l'entreprise dans sa globalité fut estimée à 0,85 selon la formule de prospective Spearman-Brown. On a trouvé qu'il existait une corrélation valable entre les douze rubriques de l'échelle d'engagement et les résultats totaux de l'échelle au niveau .001 de signification.

Les données relatives à la présente étude furent recueillies auprès des travailleurs à la production de six sociétés de Vancouver en Colombie-Britannique. Trois de ces entreprises étaient respectivement engagées dans les industries de la conservation de la viande, du raffinage du sucre et de la transformation du lait ; deux autres s'occupaient de la production et de la distribution d'énergie ; la dernière fabriquait des émetteurs de téléphone. Ces sociétés étaient de dimensions moyennes, et le nombre de leurs salariés variait entre 200 et 600 personnes. On a remis le questionnaire à 550 travailleurs à la production des six sociétés et, après un rappel, 68 pour cent d'entre eux (377) ont retourné des questionnaires utilisables.

Le gamma de Goodman et de Kruskal (troisième série du groupe) fut utilisé pour apprécier l'intensité d'association entre la spécialisation des emplois et le degré d'engagement dans l'entreprise. L'analyse des données a permis d'en arriver aux conclusions suivantes :

1° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la spécialisation des emplois, telle que constatée par la mécanisation de la chaîne de production, et le degré d'engagement *global* dans l'entreprise.

2° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la nature répétitive du travail et la volonté des travailleurs de faire des efforts en vue d'assurer le succès de l'entreprise.

3° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la simplification du travail et le désir des salariés de rester au service de l'entreprise.

Les conclusions fondamentales de ces données sont importantes sous deux rapports. Premièrement, elles semblent être la confirmation expérimentale et logique des constatations des chercheurs qui prétendent que la spécialisation des emplois exerce une influence négative sur les attitudes et le comportement de l'homme dans son milieu de travail. En second lieu, ces conclusions sont importantes parce qu'elles indiquent que le degré d'engagement des cols bleus dans l'entreprise est influencé par l'ampleur de la spécialisation de leurs postes, alors que l'observation expérimentale de leur comportement vis-à-vis l'entreprise indique uniquement que la satisfaction du travailleur à l'endroit de son emploi et de son employeur, l'aliénation au travail et l'absentéisme sont affectés par l'ampleur de la spécialisation des postes de travail.

Task Specialization and Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Examination Among Blue-Collar Workers

Muhammad Jamal

The present study was undertaken to examine empirically the proposition that specialization in jobs negatively affects the organizational commitment of industrial blue-collar workers. The field work for this study was done among 377 production workers in six companies in Vancouver, British Columbia. The analysis of the data indicated clearly that workers in highly specialized jobs tended to be less committed to their employing organization than workers working on less specialized jobs. In addition, it was observed that task repetition and task simplification were, respectively, inversely related to workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization and to workers' desire to remain in the employing organization for an indefinite period of time.

Since the beginning of industrialization, task specialization has been the cardinal principle in designing industrial jobs. This principle gained momentum with the advent of scientific management at the turn of the century and, later, with the introduction of assemblyline technologies. While there is not doubt that task specialization has led to an increase in efficiency and productivity in industrial organizations, it has also

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given rise to a number of human as well as technical problems. Associated with increased task specialization are the problems of workers' negative attitudes towards their jobs and companies¹ as well as the difficulty in coordination of specialized tasks².

This paper reports the results of a survey done among 550 industrial workers in British Columbia. The research question asked was : Are workers in highly specialized jobs less committed to their employing organization than workers in less specialized jobs ?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Task specialization refers to the condition in which the components of a work process are divided into various minute tasks and only a limited number of tasks are assigned to an individual job.³ It is generally agreed that this process has three typical consequences 1) task fragmentation, 2) task repetition, and 3) task simplification. Fragmentation of tasks is a typical outcome of the process of task specialization because,

¹ M. FAIRCHILD, « The Significance of Skill, » *Personnel Journal*, 9, 1930, 128-175 ; Charles WALKER, « The Problem of the Repetitive Job, » *Harvard Business Review*, 28, 1950, 54-59 ; J. WALKER and R. MARRIOT, « A Study of Some Attitudes to Factory Work, » *Occupational Psychology*, 25, 1951, 181-191 ; Charles WALKER and Robert GUEST, *The Man on the Assembly Line*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1952 ; Ely CHINOY, *Automobile Workers and the American Dream*, New York, Doubleday, Inc., 1955 ; Neil WARREN, « Job Simplification vs. Job Enlargement, » *Journal of Industrial Engineering*, 9, 1958, 435-439 ; Robert BLAUNER, *Alienation and Freedom : The Factory Worker and his Industry*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964 ; Arthur TURNER and Paul LAWRENCE, *Industrial Jobs and the Worker : An Investigation of Response to Task Attributes*, Boston, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1965 ; Jon SHEPARD, « Functional Specialization and Work Attitudes, » *Industrial Relations*, 8, 1969, 185-194 ; Jon SHEPARD, *Automation and Alienation : A Study of Office and Factory Workers*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1971 ; Barbara KIRSCH and Joseph LENGERMANN, « An Empirical Test of Robert Blauner's Ideas on Alienation in Work as Applied to Different Type Jobs in a White-Collar Setting, » *Sociology and Social Research*, 56, 1971-72, 180-194 ; Jon SHEPARD, « Specialization, Autonomy, and Job Satisfaction, » *Industrial Relations*, 12, 1973, 274-281.

² George STRAUSS and Leonard SAYLES, *Personnel : The Human Problems of Management* Englewood cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1972, p. 191.

³ Muhammad JAMAL, Task Specialization and Organizational Attachment : An Empirical Examination Among Blue-Collar Workers in Vancouver, British Columbia (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1972), p. 1.

when the work process is subdivided minutely, the contribution of the individual job becomes a tiny fragment in the whole work process. The job of an automobile assembly-line worker is a good example of a high degree of task fragmentation. His job may be to tighten one or a few bolts on the bumper of a car, which might represent a thousandth part of the completed car. When a limited number of tasks are assigned to an individual job, the work cycle becomes short and consequently the tasks are performed repetitively. Again, the job of the automobile worker offers a good example. Because the worker is responsible for tightening bolts in the bumper of a car, he does so invariably again and again on all cars which come to his work station. Finally, since the work process is divided into various minute tasks and only a limited number of tasks are assigned to a job, it does not take long to learn the job. In most cases jobs become so simplified that they can be learned in a matter of hours or even minutes.⁴

Porter and Smith⁵ have defined organizational commitment as a special kind of relationship between a worker and his employing organization in which the worker (1) accepts and supports the goals and policies of the employing organization ; (2) shows a willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization and (3) shows a strong desire to remain a member of his employing organization for an indefinite period of time.

It is argued here that the three components of task specialization affect the three dimensions of organizational commitment : task fragmentation affects workers' acceptance and support to the goals and policies of the employing organization ; task repetition affects workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization and ; task simplification affects workers' desire to remain a member of the employing organization.

In jobs where task fragmentation is high a worker performs only a few minute operations in a whole work process, which gives him a feeling of incompleteness about his job. This feeling of incompleteness is further accentuated when the worker fails to observe a meaningful connection

⁴ Robert DUBIN, *The World of Work*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958, p. 179.

⁵ Lyman PORTER and F. SMITH, « Etiology of Organizational Commitment », Irvine, Graduate School of Administration, University of California, 1971.

between his work and the final finished product. Since his contribution to the final product is very limited, in many instances the worker has only a vague idea of what his organization produces. His remoteness from the final product makes work simply an instrumental activity — an activity, as Marxian scholars argue, « ... not to satisfy a need, but only means to satisfy the needs outside it ». Since a high degree of task fragmentation in jobs restricts workers' conception of the goals of the organization, it is hypothesized that there will be an inverse relationship between task fragmentation and workers' acceptance and support to the goals and policies of the employing organization.

In highly repetitive jobs, a worker usually performs one or a few small operations in the work process over and over again in a short time with little or no change. His autonomy in planning and organizing his job is limited to the extent that even the tools at work are predetermined ⁶. Thus, the workers' chances to take initiative and show originality are greatly restricted in repetitive jobs. Work becomes for him a sort of mechanical activity in which his effort has little or no role in its performance. Since a high degree of task repetition in jobs does not allow the workers to use their larger abilities in doing their work, it is hypothesized that workers in highly repetitive jobs will exert less effort for the success of the employing organization.

In jobs where task simplification is high, a worker learns his job in a few days or even a few hours. This excessive simplification in job deprives the worker of any real sense of skill. Workers who exercise skill take pride in their achievements, but the worker who learns his job in notime knows that he can be easily replaced. The feeling of easy replacement is further accentuated because of the limited chances of advancement in simplified jobs. It is generally agreed that in companies where the majority of jobs are simplified, there is a sharp distinction between skilled and unskilled jobs ⁷. Because the majority of jobs are unskilled, and because there are few skilled jobs to which workers can be promoted, chances of advancement for an average worker are limited. Since a high degree of task simplification in jobs makes workers an easily replaceable commodity and blocks his advancement, it is hypo-

⁶ Charles WALKER and Robert GUEST, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷ James THOMPSON, *Organizations in Action*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, p. 104.

thesized that workers in highly simplified jobs will be less desirous of staying in the employing organization.

In the preceding paragraphs, negative relationships have been hypothesized between the three components of task specialization and the three dimensions of organizational commitment. Therefore, here, a negative relationship is proposed between task specialization and the *overall* organizational commitment.

More specifically, following are the four hypotheses of the present study :

1. Task fragmentation is inversely related to workers' acceptance and support to the goals and policies of the employing organization.
2. Task repetition is inversely related to workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization.
3. Task simplification is inversely related to workers' desire to stay in the employing organization for an indefinite period of time.
4. Task specialization is inversely related to workers' commitment to their employing organization.

MEASUREMENT

In this study task specialization has been measured in two different ways ; by observing the technological processes in workers' jobs and by asking workers about the extent of task repetition and task simplification in their jobs⁸. Recent writers in technology⁹ have noted that each stage in the development of production technology is associated with a specific degree of task specialization. Their findings suggest that task specialization is highest at the stage of machine-line technology, somewhat moderate

⁸ In the 'Organizational Commitment Survey', no data were available on the component of task fragmentation. Therefore, it was not possible to test the hypothesized relationship between task fragmentation in workers' jobs and their acceptance and support to the goals and policies of the employing organization.

⁹ Robert BLAUNER, *op. cit.*; William FAUNCE, « Automation and the Division of Labor, » *Social Problems*, 13, 1965, 149-159; Jon SHEPARD, *Automation and Alienation: A Study of Office and Factory Workers*, *op. cit.*

at handwork/machine-work stage,¹⁰ and may be low at the stage of full automation¹¹. Following their line of reasoning, production departments in various organizations under study were classified as high, medium, and low in degree of task specialization on the basis of the technological processes entailed in the jobs of the majority of workers by the author.

Task repetition was measured with the amount of variety a worker experiences in his present job. The following question was used to tap task repetition :

In your present job, (check one)

_____do you do many different things ?

_____do you do the same thing over and over ?

Workers who indicated they had to do the same thing over and over at their jobs were considered as having a high degree of task repetition. Whereas those who had to do many different things at their jobs were considered low on task repetition.

Task simplification was measured with the amount of time spent by a worker in learning his present job. The following question was used to tap the extent of task simplification in workers' jobs :

How long does a person have to spend in training
or experience to be able to handle a job like yours ?

_____Less than a month

_____1-3 months

_____3 months to 2 years

_____Over 2 years

Workers who spent less than three months in learning their present job were labelled as having a high degree of task simplification. While those

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of production line mechanization, see Martin MEISSNER, *Technology and the Workers*, San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Company, 1969 ; Georges FRIEDMANN, *Industrial Society : The Emergence of the Human Problems of Automation*. New York, Free Press, 1964.

¹¹ For reasons of considering automated jobs as low in task specialization, see Muhammad JAMAL, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-55.

who spent more than three months were considered low on task simplification.

Organizational commitment was measured from responses to twelve items on a Likert-type three points scale of agree, undecided and disagree¹². The items were designed in such a way that every four of the twelve items in the organizational commitment scale had to tap one of the three dimensions of commitment. The twelve items are presented below under their respective dimensions :

GOALS

- (1) The things this company makes are important to Canada.
1 — Agree 2 — Undecided 3 — Disagree
- (2) I find my goals and this company's very similar.
- (3) Often I find it difficult to agree with company's policies on important matters relating to workers.
- (4) I really care about the fate of this company.

EFFORT

- (5) I am willing to work extra hard at my job in order to help this company be successful.
- (6) This company really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.
- (7) I don't mind putting in extra time if the company needs me to.
- (8) It bothers me very much to be absent from work.

DESIRE

- (9) I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this company.
- (10) There is not too much to be gained by sticking with this company indefinitely.
- (11) I would keep working for this company even if I were offered more money to work somewhere else.
- (12) I could just as well be working for a different company as long as the type of work were similar.

¹² Muhammad JAMAL, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-17.

Internal consistency reliability of the *overall* organizational commitment scale was estimated to be .85 by using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula. Item analysis was done to assess the adequacy of each item in the scale.¹³ All the twelve items in the commitment scale were found to be correlated with the total scale scores at .001 level of significance. Smallest Space Analysis¹⁴ was used to observe clearly the structure underlying the inter-item association among items. The resultant two dimensional smallest space analysis solution (coefficient of alienation was = .16) suggested that the twelve items may tap the three proposed dimensions of organizational commitment and that the three dimensions appear to greatly overlap.

For the sake of analysis, respondents were classified as high, medium, and low on the scale of organizational commitment. This was done in the following manner. As mentioned previously, organizational commitment scale had twelve items. Of these twelve items, nine were positive items while three were negative items. Respondents who agreed with a positively worded item or disagreed with a negatively worded item were given a score of one. Those who disagreed with a positive item or agreed with a negative item were assigned a score of zero. Respondents who were undecided on a positive or a negative item were also given a score of zero. Respondents who scored nine or more were considered to have a high degree of organizational commitment ; those who scored five to eight were labelled as having moderate organizational commitment and ; those who scored four or less were termed as low on organizational commitment.

SAMPLE

The « Organizational Commitment Survey » was undertaken in 1972 to test the hypothesized relationship between task specialization and organizational commitment. The field work for the survey was done among production workers working in six companies in Vancouver, British Columbia. Three of these companies were involved respectively in packing meat, sugar and milk ; two were involved in power generation and distribution and ; one was involved in manufacturing telephone transmitters. The companies were medium sized companies in the area ranging in size

¹³ J.P. GUILFORD, *Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education* : New York, McGraw-Hill, 1965.

from 200 employees to 600 employees. A total of 550 production workers in six companies were given the « Organizational Commitment Questionnaire », and, with one follow-up, 68 per cent (377) of these workers returned usable questionnaires. An average six to eight hours was spent in each company by the researcher observing the technological processes entailed in workers' jobs.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 reports the joint bivariate distributions on the production line mechanization (task specialization) and *Overall* organizational commitment. It should be recalled that an inverse relationship was hypothesized between production line mechanization and overall organizational commitment. Data presented in Table 1 tend to support the hypothesized

TABLE 1

**There is a Moderate Negative Association Between Task Specialization
(As Measured by Production Line Mechanization)
and OVERALL Organizational Commitment**

<i>Organizational Commitment</i>	<i>Task Specialization</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Low	34%	21%	17%	28%
Medium	47	53	39	48
High	19	27	44	24
TOTAL	100%	101%	100%	100%
(No. of cases)	(146)	(154)	(66)	(366)

GAMMA = $-.25$

¹⁴ Louis GUTTMAN, « A General Nonmetric Technique for Finding the Smallest Coordinate Space for a Configuration of Points », *Psychometrika*, 33, 1968, 469-506 ; Milton BLOOMBAUM, « Doing Smallest Space Analysis », *Conflict Resolution*, 14, 1970, 409-416.

relationship. The $-.25$ value of Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma¹⁵ suggests that knowledge of the production line mechanization in workers' departments in the sample of this study reduces 25 per cent error in explaining their commitment to their employing organization.

Table 2 presents the cross-tabulation between task repetition and workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization.¹⁶ The hypothesis, here, suggested an inverse relationship between task repetition and workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the organization. An examination of the data presented in Table 2 strongly supports the hypothesis. Workers who experience high task repetition in their jobs appear almost twice in proportion in the

TABLE 2

**There is A Strong Negative Association Between Task Repetition
and Workers' Willingness to Exert Effort for the Success
of the Employing Organization**

<i>Organizational Commitment : EFFORT</i>	<i>Task Repetition</i>		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Low	70%	37%	47%
High	30	63	53
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
(No. of cases)	(112)	(252)	(374)

GAMMA = $-.59$

¹⁵ For a discussion of gamma, see Leo GOODMAN and William KRUSKAL, « Measures of Association for cross classifications », *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 49, 1954, 747-763 ; Herbert COSTNER, « Criteria for Measures of Association », *American Sociological Review*, 30, 1965, 341-353.

¹⁶ The three indexes for the three dimensions of organizational commitment were constructed in the following fashion : Since there were four items in each dimension of organizational commitment, every respondent, potentially, had a chance to score from 0 to 4 ; zero by remaining undecided or disagreeing to all items worded positively or remaining undecided or agreeing to all items worded negatively ; four by agreeing with all positive items and disagreeing with all negative items. Workers who scored three or four on any of the three dimensions were considered high on that particular dimension and those who scored two or less were labelled as low.

low organizational commitment (Effort) category than the workers who experience low task repetition in their jobs. The $-.59$ value of gamma suggests that knowledge about the degree of task repetition in blue-collar workers' jobs reduces 59 per cent error in explaining their willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization.

Table 3 reports the joint bivariate distributions between task simplification and workers' desire to remain in the employing organization. Earlier, a negative relationship was hypothesized between the two variables. Analysis presented in Table 3, again, tends to support the hypothesized relationship between task simplification and workers' desire to remain in the system. Knowledge of the extent of task simplification in blue-collar workers' job reduces 40 per cent error in explaining their desire to stay in the employing organization.

TABLE 3

**There is a Moderate Negative Association Between Task Simplification
and Workers' Desire to Remain in the Employing Organization**

<i>Organizational Commitment : DESIRE</i>	<i>Task Simplification</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Low	83%	67%	76%
High	17	33	24
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
(No. of cases)	(210)	(157)	(367)

GAMMA = $-.40$

In order to observe whether or not the above mentioned *zero* order associations are *spurious*, these relationships were examined after controlling for several personal and job factors, such as age, sex, marital status, education, income, length of service in the company, and shift-time. Table 4 presents a summary of the results of such analysis. The most important finding which appears from the *first* order analysis is the remarkable consistency of results across various personal and job factors. Of the 51 coefficients, reported in Table 4, not a single one contradicts our hypotheses, that is, all of them are in the direction of the hypothesized relationships. Only six coefficients are below .20.

TABLE 4

There is a Remarkable Consistency in Results About the Hypothesized
Relationship (S) Across Various Personal and Job Factors

<i>PERSONAL AND JOB FACTORS</i>	<i>Task Special. vs. Organ. Commitment</i>	<i>Task Repet. vs. EFFORT</i>	<i>Task Simplif. vs. DESIRE</i>
AGE	(N)	(N)	(N)
18-29 years	-.26* 97	-.75 95	-.60 96
30-44 years	-.48 146	-.66 147	-.40 147
45-65 years	-.17 118	-.20 112	-.15 114
SEX			
Male	-.32 250	-.48 247	-.41 250
Female	-.13 115	-.80 113	-.50 113
EDUCATION			
Up to Grade 10	-.46 158	-.41 155	-.49 158
Over Grade 10	-.26 202	-.76 200	-.44 200
MARITAL STATUS			
Single	-.15 62	-.73 59	-.41 61
Married	-.29 261	-.56 259	-.37 260
Others	-.44 46	-.45 46	-.69 46
INCOME PER MONTH			
Under \$600	-.46 187	-.74 186	-.50 185
Over \$600	-.12 179	-.40 176	-.32 179
LENGTH OF SERVICE			
Under 5 years	-.44 161	-.88 160	-.54 161
Over 5 years	-.22 208	-.17 204	-.27 206
SHIFT-TIME			
Morning	-.35 214	-.50 214	-.38 215
Afternoon/Night	-.56 39	-.80 39	-.35 39
Swing Shifts	-.24 110	-.72 106	-.46 107

* These values are gamma coefficient.

However, within the categories of each moderator variable, the relationships show little or no consistent pattern across three independent variables. Only in the case of monthly income and length of service in the company, the relationships exhibit a clear pattern. For workers who make less than \$600 a month, the amount of association between task specialization and overall organizational commitment, between task repetition and willingness of exerting effort for the organization, and between

task simplification and desire to remain in the organization are consistently higher than for workers who make over \$600 a month. Similarly, for workers who have been working in their present employing organization for less than five years, the amount of associations between task specialization and overall organizational commitment, between task repetition and effort, and between task simplification and desire are significantly higher than for workers who have been working in their present organization for more than five years.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical examination of the three hypotheses regarding blue-collar workers' commitment to their employing organization suggests the following conclusions :

- 1) There is a negative relationship between task specialization, as measured by production line mechanization, and *overall* organizational commitment.
- 2) There is a negative relationship between task repetition and workers' willingness to exert effort for the success of the employing organization.
- 3) There is a negative relationship between task simplification and workers' desire to remain in the employing organization.

It is believed that these data based conclusions are important in two respects. First, they appear to be an empirical and logical extension of the findings of investigators who argue that specialization in jobs negatively affects workers' attitudes and behaviour.¹⁷ Second, these conclusions are important because they indicated that the blue-collar workers' commitment to the employing organization is influenced by the degree of task specialization in their jobs, whereas the available empirical evidence in organization behaviour has shown only that workers' satisfaction from job and a company, alienation from work, and absence behaviour are influenced by the extent of task specialization in jobs.

On the other hand, the present research indicates that irrespective of how specialization is measured, twenty to sixty per cent (see Table 1

¹⁷ Some of the writers who argued that specialization in jobs negatively affects workers' attitudes and behaviour include ; Charles WALKER and Robert GUEST, *op. cit.* ; E. CHINOY, *op. cit.* ; Robert BLAUNER, *op. cit.* ; Georges FRIEDMANN, *op. cit.* ; Arthur TURNER and Paul LAWRENCE, *op. cit.* ; Jon SHEPARD, *op. cit.* ; Barbara KIRSCH and Joseph LENGERMANN, *op. cit.*

to 3) workers report moderate or high commitment to the employing organization. Thus, not all workers find specialized jobs frustrating. This finding is in agreement with the thesis of Hulin and Blood ¹⁸ who argued that the individual differences are important in understanding worker responses to specialized or enlarged jobs. Further support to the above line of reasoning comes from Table 5, where the relationship is reported between personal/job factors and *overall* organizational commitment and

TABLE 5

Workers Who Are Older or Make More Than \$600 a Month or Have Been in the Company for More Than Five Years Tend to be less Affected by High Task Specialization, Repetition, and Simplification in Jobs

PERSONAL/ JOB FACTORS	Organizational Commitment		EFFORT		DESIRE	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
AGE						
18-29 years	81%	18%	84%	16%	91%	9%
30-44 years	70	30	74	26	84	16
45-64 years	53	47	46	54	74	26
SEX						
Male	64%	36%	62%	38%	84%	16%
Female	69	31	85	15	82	18
EDUCATION						
Up to Grade 10	63%	37%	59%	41%	82%	18%
Over Grade 10	70	30	80	20	85	15
MARITAL STATUS						
Single	69%	31%	78%	22%	83%	17%
Married	65	35	68	32	84	16
Others	65	35	63	37	79	21
INCOME PER MONTH						
Under \$600	72%	28%	80%	20%	84%	16%
Over \$600	55	45	56	44	81	19
LENGTH OF SERVICE						
Under 5 years	75%	25%	89%	11%	86%	14%
Over 5 years	59	41	47	53	80	20
SHIFT-TIME						
Morning	68%	32%	67%	33%	84%	16%
Afternoon/Night	60	40	77	23	79	21
Swing Shifts	60	40	73	27	83	17

¹⁸ Charles HULIN and Milton BLOOD, « Job Enlargement, Individual Differences, and Worker Responses, » *Psychological Bulletin*, 69, 1968, 41-55.

its two dimensions only for workers who were in high task specialization, high task repetition, and high task simplification categories. Data presented in Table 5 indicates that for workers who are older or make more than \$600 a month or have been with the company for more than five years, specialization in jobs may be less likely to arouse negative feelings for management.

Viewed from this perspective, it may be said that the problem of specialization in jobs may be alleviated to some extent by fitting people to jobs. Employees who do not find specialized jobs frustrating should be given such jobs, while those who react negatively to specialized jobs should not be assigned to such jobs. It is the responsibility of management, at least, to attempt to find a better fit between its human resources and its technical job requirements.

Spécialisation dans l'emploi et appartenance à l'organisation

Depuis le commencement de l'ère industrielle, la spécialisation des tâches a été à la base de la création des postes de travail. Ce principe a été vulgarisé d'abord par le taylorisme au tournant du siècle et, un peu plus tard, par l'introduction des chaînes de montage ou d'assemblage dans les usines. Même s'il ne fait pas de doute que la spécialisation des postes de travail a augmenté l'efficacité et la productivité des sociétés industrielles, elle a en même temps soulevé beaucoup de problèmes humains et techniques. Associés à la spécialisation des emplois se posent des problèmes sérieux relativement aux comportements négatifs des travailleurs à l'égard des postes qu'ils occupent et des entreprises qui les emploient de même que, au plan technique, la difficulté d'établir une bonne coordination de postes de travail trop spécialisés.

L'article ci-dessus étudie le rapport entre la spécialisation des emplois et le degré d'engagement des travailleurs manuels dans les entreprises. Qui dit spécialisation des emplois dit subdivision des différents éléments d'un travail à exécuter en plusieurs tâches parcellaires de telle sorte que l'emploi ne contient qu'un nombre limité de tâches. D'une façon générale, on reconnaît que cette façon de procéder comporte trois conséquences typiques : le travail à exécuter est fragmentaire ; il se répète ; il est simple. Porter et Smith ont défini l'engagement comme une sorte de rapport particulier entre le travailleur et l'entreprise qui l'emploie dans lequel le travailleur endosse et appuie les objectifs et la politique de l'entreprise, démontre la volonté d'en assurer le succès par ses propres efforts et désire rester à son service pendant un temps indéfini. L'auteur soutient que les trois conséquences fondamentales de la spécialisation des postes de travail affectent le degré d'engagement du salarié dans l'entreprise dans ses trois dimensions : la fragmentation du travail exerce une influence sur les travailleurs dans leur adhésion et leur appui aux objectifs de l'entreprise ; le caractère répétitif du travail, leur volonté

de faire des efforts nécessaires pour en assurer la réussite et la simplification du travail, leur désir de continuer à y demeurer.

Dans cette étude, la spécialisation des postes de travail a été considérée sous deux aspects distincts, d'abord en observant sur place le processus de travail et ensuite en interrogeant les travailleurs sur l'ampleur de la répétition et de la simplification de la tâche. Quant au degré d'engagement dans l'entreprise, il a été mesuré à partir des réponses à douze questions sur une échelle de type Likert à trois barreaux : oui, indécis, non. Le questionnaire fut conçu de telle sorte que chaque tiers des douze rubriques relatives au degré d'engagement soit orienté vers une des trois dimensions de l'engagement. La crédibilité interne logique de l'échelle d'engagement dans l'entreprise dans sa globalité fut estimée à 0.85 selon la formule de prospective Spearman-Brown. On a trouvé qu'il existait une corrélation valable entre les douze rubriques de l'échelle d'engagement et les résultats totaux de l'échelle au niveau .001 de signification.

Les données relatives à la présente étude furent recueillies auprès des travailleurs à la production de six sociétés de Vancouver en Colombie-Britannique. Trois de ces entreprises étaient respectivement engagées dans les industries de la conservation de la viande, du raffinage du sucre et de la transformation du lait ; deux autres s'occupaient de la production et de la distribution d'énergie ; la dernière fabriquait des émetteurs de téléphone. Ces sociétés étaient de dimensions moyennes, et le nombre de leurs salariés variait entre 200 et 600 personnes. On a remis le questionnaire à 550 travailleurs à la production des six sociétés et, après un rappel, 68 pour cent d'entre eux (377) ont retourné des questionnaires utilisables.

Le gamma de Goodman et de Kruskal (troisième série du groupe) fut utilisé pour apprécier l'intensité d'association entre la spécialisation des emplois et le degré d'engagement dans l'entreprise. L'analyse des données a permis d'en arriver aux conclusions suivantes :

- 1° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la spécialisation des emplois, telle que constatée par la mécanisation de la chaîne de production, et le degré d'engagement *global* dans l'entreprise.
- 2° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la nature répétitive du travail et la volonté des travailleurs de faire des efforts en vue d'assurer le succès de l'entreprise.
- 3° Il y a un rapport négatif entre la simplification du travail et le désir des salariés de rester au service de l'entreprise.

Les conclusions fondamentales de ces données sont importantes sous deux rapports. Premièrement, elles semblent être la confirmation expérimentale et logique des constatations des chercheurs qui prétendent que la spécialisation des emplois exerce une influence négative sur les attitudes et le comportement de l'homme dans son milieu de travail. En second lieu, ces conclusions sont importantes parce qu'elles indiquent que le degré d'engagement des cols bleus dans l'entreprise est influencé par l'ampleur de la spécialisation de leurs postes, alors que l'observation expérimentale de leur comportement vis-à-vis l'entreprise indique uniquement que la satisfaction du travailleur à l'endroit de son emploi et de son employeur, l'aliénation au travail et l'absentéisme sont affectés par l'ampleur de la spécialisation des postes de travail.